

## *Памятник*

Во мне конец, во мне начало.  
Мной совершенное так мало!  
Но все ж я прочное эвено:  
Мне это счастье дано.

В России новой, но великой,  
Поставят идол мой великий  
На перекрестке двух дорог,  
Где время, ветер и песок...

*28 января 1928, Париж*

## *Janus*

In me things end, and start again.  
I am, though my life's work is small,  
A link in an unbroken chain—  
That happiness, at least, is real.

And come the day that Russia's great  
Once more, you'll see my statue stand  
Beside a place where four roads meet  
With wind, and drifting time, and sand.

*28 January 1928, Paris*

*(Translated from the Russian by Robert Chandler)*

## *Pomník*

Ve mně je konec i počátek skryt.  
Tak málo jsem dokázal završit!  
Přesto však, tohle štěstí mám,  
jsem pevný spoj, kruh netrhám.

Na Rusi nové, převeliké však,  
má modla o dvou tvářích bude stát.  
Tam, kde dvě cesty křižují se,  
tam, kde je vítr, čas a písek...

*28. ledna 1928, Paříž*

*(Translated from the Russian into Czech by Petr Borkovec)*

*Katerina and Her Kind*

I'm not sure exactly why, but a lot of my recent writing has been for children. What I can say is that Vasko Popa has had something to do with it. In the summer of 1999, I opened Anvil's *Collected Poems*—translations by Anne Pennington, revised and expanded by Francis R. Jones—at the breakfast table, and among the things I looked at was his “Hen”. The same day, I wrote my own “Questioning a Hen”, and, in the following few weeks, most of the poems that went into *All Sorts*, my first children's book.

“Questioning a Hen” could never be mistaken for a Popa product. It is too long-winded and it strikes a very different note. Neither Popa's hen nor mine is a simple barnyard fowl, but his is the more mysterious. “Hen”, even in English, is the superior poem, being both smaller in size and bigger in scope. The true value, to me, of my borrowing—I wish I could call it theft, in the Eliot manner—was the reminder that the ordinary world of creatures and heavenly cycles was still potentially wondrous subject matter, if handled right. Reading “Hen” at breakfast gave me new confidence: enough, in fact, to keep me uninterruptedly busy for three or four weeks.

Popa has not been the only provider of such refreshment and stimulus. Earlier this year, a mutual friend, Charles Boyle, showed me Wiesiek Powaga's as yet unpublished translations of some of Zbigniew Herbert's miniature prose pieces, of the sort with which Herbert used to interlard his collections of verse. A number were already known to me from the translations of Czesław Miłosz and Peter Dale Scott in the Penguin Modern European Poets *Selected Poems* of 1968, while others were quite new. “Why not prose poems for children?” I instantly thought. Scarcely a money-making wheeze, but I have so far composed 40 of the possible 100 that my wife and I may well end up publishing ourselves, as we have done with *All Sorts* and *Alphabicycle Order*.

The riddling, the fable-making, the wily humour and the broad-minded acceptance of what is inexplicable or troubling